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The American RECORD GUIDE



JULY, 1950 - VOL. 16 No. 11



Edited by

PETER HUGH REED

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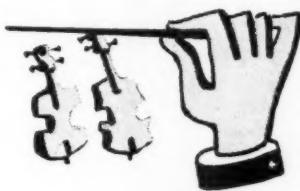
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The American RECORD GUIDE



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American Music Lover

One Mystery Cleared

Editorial Notes

IT HAS always been our policy in regard to critical correspondence to ascertain the authenticity of the writer's contentions before presenting them to our readers. This has saved not a few headaches and apologies. To be sure, like all editors, we have had to make apologies or present the other side of the picture. When the "other side" presents cogent facts to supplement an initial critical offering, it is only fair to print those facts.

In our May editorial we took up the cudgels of American long playing records after reading two derogatory letters printed in the Editorial of the April issue of the English journal, *The Gramophone*. The first letter, a lengthy one, was from a *Gramophone* reader in Vancouver, Canada. The second was purported from an electrical engineer residing in New York City. As the latter's name is unlisted in the New York Telephone Directory, we have been unable to ascertain his status as an engineer. (An electrical engineer is not necessarily an audio engineer.) Considering the absurdity of some of this correspondent's comments, we and our technical advisory staff cannot but feel he was not qualified to speak upon the subject.

There is an interesting sequel to the Vancouver correspondent's lengthy letter. It arrived this past month from a valued reader of our own, Mr. Dave Bee, also of Vancouver. Here is what Mr. Bee has to say.

"Dear Mr. Reed:—As one of your interested subscribers, I have some comments to make in regard to your Editorial in the May issue of *The American Record Guide*.

"You refer to a letter published in the April issue of *The Gramophone*, concerning long playing records, and written by my good friend Mr. Vic. Ford of this city. (Yes, in spite of that letter he wrote, he is still my friend!)

(Continued on page 357)



Beecham recording in Columbia's 30th Street Studio

Columbia's New Recording Studio

By George F. Varkonyi

THE RECORD INDUSTRY has made such great strides in the past few years, particularly with its latest development — long playing records, that the editor and I decided to go behind the scenes to observe at the source the birth pains of this new technique in the process of the recording. Now that I look back on all we observed and learned during this quest, I heave a sigh of relief, for recording which is an art is now being treated as such by technicians and artists alike.

Because Columbia really developed long playing, microgroove discs, it was to this company that we turned for observation and enlightenment. For the past two years, Columbia has had its own special studio for the bulk of its recording sessions, in which the engineers no longer have to improvise with questionable acoustics as in the concert hall. Herein lies our story.

The importance of good acoustics in concert halls is well known. Every music listener has experienced halls where the orchestra seemed to take on an especially brilliant tonal quality or where the bass instruments were displayed

to advantage. In a poorer acoustical environment, this same orchestra might sound muddy or strident and its individual instruments lack clarity of definition. This is, of course, due to the fact that the listener hears only a small portion of directly radiated sound. About 90 percent of all sound heard in a concert hall is reflected from walls, floor and ceiling. In recordings, acoustics take on additional importance as the orchestra is no longer a living "presence" to the listener.

When a sound is produced, variations in air pressure are set into motion which progresses spherically from its source until obstructed or, as the case would be in an open flat field, until the sound energy diminishes to inaudibility. In a studio, the sound waves are soon obstructed by walls, seats or other objects in the room. These objects either absorb or reflect the sound, the relative amount depending on the sound's pitch or frequency, and the material and shape of the impeding objects. The higher the frequency, the more easily it is absorbed by drapes and acoustic tile. The lower frequencies, on the other hand, are primarily reflected. As reflected

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waves bounce back and forth they must be controlled, but not eliminated as in the dead studio or hall where some orchestral instruments assume a strident, lack-luster quality. The correct balance between the absorbing and reflecting surfaces in studio or hall design is of the greatest importance.

A sound does not die out immediately after an instrument stops playing, but instead bounces back and forth according to the reflecting surfaces of the room. The time it takes to become inaudible, after the sound source has ceased to supply the energy, is known as reverberation time. (This is a non-technical definition.)

Reverberation time is a factor of the size of a hall or studio and the amount of absorption and reflection therein. It is the most complete measure of its acoustic properties. The proper reproduction of the sonorities of an orchestra, for example, is completely dependent on the reverberation time; and how quickly and evenly a sound dies out determines the fullness of tone. Larger halls naturally have a longer reverberation period, because it takes more time for sound waves to travel back and forth between the various reflecting surfaces. Examples of obnoxious, long-reverberation-time can be found in almost any sports arena where the resultant echoes are very noticeable. On the other hand, studios that are too small return the reflected waves so quickly that interference results between the original sound and its reflection and causes distortion.

Studio Designing

It is interesting to discover that with all the work done on acoustics and with all the data collected no infallible formula exists for the design of the perfect studio. Correct design is still the result of painstaking trial and error. Only recently were engineers conscious of the importance of acoustics. The reason the listener was not aware of this can easily be understood when we consider how much music was lost in old recordings. High surface noise, restricted frequency range, and poor reproducing equipment all contributed to this. Now with quieter surfaces and wide range recordings, the acoustics are very noticeable to the tone conscious. Radio broadcasters were the first to tackle the problem of having their studios properly designed; and sound reproduction went through a phase of

dead acoustics from which we are now emerging.

The early acoustic engineers did not know enough about controlling sound reflections and absorption, so they eliminated them as much as possible by indiscriminate padding and draping of studios with sound absorbent materials. This oversimplified microphone technique to the point where nearly all of the sound that was picked up came directly from the orchestral instruments. The studio contributed little more than the physical space to house the orchestra. Naturally, reproduction was dead and lifeless. The individual instruments lost all their mellowness; their tone bore little resemblance to concert hall quality.

Contrasts in Tonal Quality

With the advent of long playing records, the record enthusiast — familiar in recent years with extended range technique — became more and more conscious of the difference in tonal quality of the many different makes of long playing discs. (The lack of uniformity in recording technique among the various companies is notorious.) But why were there such differences among the LPs which were supposed to have standard electrical characteristics? Though early LPs were made from old masters, there are still complaints about more recent LP dubbings from varied sources. Discounting differences caused by early imperfections in manufacturing and improper reproduction, it was found that the various studios or concert halls exerted strong influences.

Now that Columbia has its own permanent studio, which its engineers think ideally meet the high standards they have set for LPs, most of the old problems should be eliminated. With the tremendous amount of research and experimenting now going on we may expect a quality of consistent excellence instead of the engineering inconsistencies of the past.

Columbia studio is most interesting. On East 30th Street, in the Murray Hill section of New York City, it was originally an old church. The high nave, the solidly built walls and double thickness of its heavy maple floors, the latter built over solid rock, form a wonderful acoustic environment for the engineers' purposes. Moreover, considering the overall size of the studio — 266,000 cubic

feet — this begins to approximate the size of a concert hall. The maple floor the engineers tell us, has been largely responsible for the splendid bass responses in recordings made in this auditorium. A minimum amount of draping is being used, just enough to control high frequency reflections and echoes, but not so much that any of the essential liveness of the hall is destroyed. The bass frequencies are always a problem inasmuch as they are not absorbed and tend to build to such tremendous proportions that they mask the higher frequencies completely. These are controlled in Columbia's new studio by breaking up the flat walls with the proper distribution of wooden, convex reflecting surfaces. How well these expedients work out was strikingly demonstrated upon arrival at the studio by Columbia's leading engineer, Mr. Vincent J. Liebler. As we walked into the large, spacious, dimly-lit hall, he clapped his hands. The percussive sound evoked was not followed by the usual irregular echo effects. The sound died out gradually and evenly with a pleasing, live effect — a wonderful accomplishment that has been demonstrated by recent recordings and may well be better demonstrated by future ones.

A Trial and Error Basis

Our engineer guide pointed out with great pride that in remodeling and designing of this old church into a modern, concert-hall type of studio all preconceived notions were taken with a grain of salt. Everything began and still does from scratch on a trial and error basis, judged solely by musical results in the actual recordings. The musically trained ear is the final criteria, not the theoretical finding of the ideal curve of the plus-minus $\frac{1}{2}$ DB from 20 to 20,000 cps which has been so religiously adhered to by some engineers.

Before the acquisition of their new studio, most of Columbia's symphony recordings in New York were made at Carnegie Hall on 57th Street in New York City. While Carnegie Hall has wonderful acoustics for concerts, it has many shortcomings as a recording studio. Naturally, drastic changes in the building were out of the question. But in the past, and even today, many compromises have been necessary which caused recordings to suffer. Perhaps the greatest advantage of the new studio over Carnegie Hall is its spaciousness and flexibility of setup. It has a floor

area of 5,335 square feet, its actual dimensions are 55 by 97 feet. As there is no fixed platform like in a concert hall, all space can be utilized, thus permitting an orchestra or chamber ensemble to be spread out for the most advantageous results. This, of course, makes for easier experimenting with the placement of instruments, formerly an impossibility on the limited stage of Carnegie Hall or any other concert auditorium. In the concert hall all musicians must sit in one position and play in one direction, but in Columbia's new studio, as in most similar places, musicians are not similarly hampered. They can be placed to play in any direction in order to effect the best tonal balance.

Ceiling Design

Another asset of this studio is the curb-roof (in architecture, a gambrel roof) which gives a desirable irregularity to the studio ceiling. This ideally reduces the amount of parallel reflecting surfaces between floor and ceiling and breaks up reflecting sound waves better than most concert halls.

In the recording of smaller groups, particularly chamber music ensembles, it is considered important by many to create the illusion of the intimacy of a small room. Columbia does this by bringing the reflecting surfaces closer to the microphone and the players. Large acoustic screens, some reflective and others absorbent, are used for this purpose and are placed experimentally until the desired effect is achieved. In this case, the sonority of a large hall is avoided, but the instruments stand out more and seem to be closer to the listener, while at the same time the right degree of liveness is retained.

Microphone placement is another interesting problem that has gone through many phases during the years. Originally, multiple microphones were necessary to pick up an entire orchestra owing to the insensitivity of earlier designs. Later, with the advent of more sensitive instruments, the single microphone technique became a fetish with many sound men, because it was assumed that microphones spaced apart would pick up sounds that were out of phase with each other and cause distortion. This is no longer considered valid and single microphones are now used in the majority of cases because one microphone is adequate. Some conductors, however, still prefer more than one for special effects.

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Columbia uses non-directional condenser microphones — a single one for overall pick up but sometimes supplementary microphones for special effects or the clarification of obscure detail. These microphones give a smooth linear response, flat from 50 to 10,000 cps. The low end of 50 cps takes care of all bass fundamentals in the average symphony orchestra composition, whereas the 10,000 cps (high end) includes all the most important harmonics. It must be remembered that although recordings are flat from 50 to 10,000 cps, this useful range extends further as the fidelity slope tapers gradually at either end of the spectrum.

The ultimate judge of all recordings is the consumer who in all probability listens to his favorite recordings in his living room. This was taken into account when the Columbia engineers designed their control room. The

size, unusually large for a control room, simulates the acoustics of an average living room. Thus, if a recording sounds natural and life-like in the control room, it will in all probability sound well in most living rooms providing proper playback equipment is used.

With all the work and "know-how," anguish and tedious experimenting that went into the development of the long playing record (not to mention money), it is not surprising that the latest issues are so realistic. This is not, however, the full story. Though the technical aspects left a lasting impression on me, I derived greater pleasure from witnessing the spirit of all participants in a recording session. Technicians and musicians took part with such enthusiasm that fine results were to be expected. One had the feeling that musical enthusiasms had subjugated the machine.

THE TOSCANINI QUESTION

By Peter Hugh Reed

IV

(Continued from last month)

When Toscanini came to the Metropolitan in 1908 as chief conductor, there were doubts regarding his abilities to interpret certain music schools — notably the German. Prior to his appearance in America, the greater number of noted operatic and symphonic conductors in this country were of German origin. When it was announced to the public that he would direct Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* and Gluck's *Orfeo* in November and December of 1908, the would-be sages were skeptical and loud in their protest. Yet, in both cases the critics and the public admitted upon hearing those performances that his was truly "a reappraising artistry," commanding the highest respect. Ten years before this, the conductor had already been recognized in his native Italy as an unrivaled interpreter of Wagner, a fact which foretold his appearances at Bayreuth in later years (1930-31). Long before he went to Bayreuth, however, critics in Germany and Austria were aware of

the power of his Wagnerian interpretations, and at least one noted German critic, Adolf Weissmann, linked him as early as 1922 with three great German conductors — Levi, Richter, and Mottl — as an outstanding Wagnerian conductor.

There are those who contend that since Toscanini began his career as an operatic conductor that he is essentially a man of the theater. This is not, in my estimation, a complete evaluation of his approach to music. It is true that he has focused his attentions mainly on the essential outlines of the music. It is a mistake, however, to say that there are no refinements or personal insistence in his music-making. These qualities are saliently exemplified on records in such places as the slow movements of the Mozart *Jupiter* and the Haydn *Clock* symphonies. It is likewise an error to say that he has no personal poetic feeling or restraint. These characteristics are to be notably encountered in his performances of the "Prelude" and the "Good Friday Music" from Wagner's *Parsifal* and the "Love Scene" from Berlioz's *Romeo and Juliet*.

The dictionary does not define communication as applying to music. But it is nonetheless a most applicable word. If communication can be defined as the "act of imparting, conferring or delivering, from one to another," surely it is not confined alone to "knowledge, opinions, or facts." The composer attempts to indicate by musical notation a mood, a picture, a dramatic scheme. The interpreter, according to his perceptions, imparts these to the listener. The subsequent intercourse between interpreter and listener may not, however, communicate the same responsiveness in all listeners. As making music provides both a mental and emotional stimuli, the mature listener's ultimate acceptance or enjoyment of an interpreter's work is contingent on both the kind of expression produced and the powers that have made that communication of feeling possible.

Eschewing hero-worship, the listener will nevertheless be attracted by the artist who communicates the most to him. That is the reason why some listeners prefer certain performances of Mozart by Beecham, of Beethoven by Weingartner or Walter, of Debussy or Stravinsky by Ansermet, of Brahms by Ormandy, and of Prokofieff and Ravel by Koussevitzky, to the same ones by Toscanini. No intelligent listener discriminates against an artist. He is instinctively drawn to any performer with whom he is mentally and emotionally *en rapport*. The listener who is most influenced by temperamental affinity best remembers and appreciates that which imparts the most to him. One is tempted to say that which he can digest most comfortably.

One Lives With Music

The listener may attend enumerable concerts of various outstanding conductors, but when he buys a recording his discrimination is likely to be motivated by purely personal reactions to communicative qualities. More than anything else, he wants to live fully with a recorded performance — with the music itself, and for this reason even if he purchases several interpretations of the same work he will in the end mentally and emotionally adjust himself to that which gives him the most complete musical satisfaction.

Tonal realism does heighten communication in interpretative art. Hence, when one great artist fares less well in these matters than

another, the listener may be influenced accordingly. Music is such a live, responsive art that many have come to resent unnatural sounding reproductions. Thus we are brought face to face with the existent opposition of many toward some of Toscanini's recordings — notably those made in Studio 8-H. I must confess that I have been unable to derive full enjoyment from quite a number of these and have resorted to taking transcriptions of certain Toscanini performances that have been broadcast from an acceptable acoustical room.

Expressive Changes

I have already intimated that the degree of emotional communication in Toscanini's work has altered in recent years. This has been noticed in his recordings, his broadcasts, and concert hall performances. By increasing the emphasis on one of the basic concepts of his interpretative art — insistence on keeping music moving at a completely unaltered pace — Toscanini has intensified the emotional excitement that his work produces. While this has helped some works, it has in others left the listener with only admiration for the maestro's amazing conductorial skill. Examples of the latter on records can be found in the recent Toscanini performances of the Mozart *Haffner* and the Beethoven *Erica* symphonies (particularly, in the latter, in the Scherzo movement).

One misunderstands this essential man of music, however, if he claims that Toscanini's musical concepts have become an obsession. They are and always have been as much a living part of him as the rhythm of his breathing. That they have through the years become increasingly intensified should have been expected. Most artists of the first rank usually polish and sharpen their working tools throughout their lives.

All music making for Toscanini has been primarily self-expression. (He should have been born a composer.) As long ago as 1922, H. T. Parker, the late critic of musical events on the *Boston Evening Transcript*, remarked that Toscanini is "not of those who would first discover the composer's thought, emotion, procedure, idiosyncrasy, and then bear them to the audience. . . What he would exhibit to his hearers, impress upon them, infuse into them, is his own reaction to the music in hand. The composer and composition fall

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into second place; the orchestra becomes no more than a responsive and imparting instrument; the conductor is 'the be-all and the end-all' of the hour; the audience listens to him, answers him, while upon its perceptions and sensibilities, he veritably plays."

Toscanini's personal expression is a two-edged sword which causes him to please or displease different listeners in any group of works as any other great orchestral leader. He is human, he is not infallible. That we owe him a huge share of admiration and respect is almost too obvious to mention. What his most ardent admirers do not owe him or themselves is blind acceptance of everything he does. Such persons, under the influence of hero-worship, actually do more harm to his reputation in intellectual circles than they realize. Careful listening and considered opinion will in the long run be a more humane, a more civilized way of honoring this great musician.



RECENT IMPORTATIONS

THERE ARE NO MAJOR RELEASES of recent months sufficiently newsworthy to rate a detailed discussion in these columns. Apparently the English record companies are becoming afflicted with that dread American disease, "duplicationitis." As for the French, it is very difficult to lay one's hands on a representative sampling of their latest efforts, blame for which situation I lay at the feet of the affiliated companies here, who either through slothfulness or carefully applied misdirection see to it that as little competition as possible filters over here from sources they are able to control. There are French records that won prizes in last year's *Disques* magazine competition, such as the Hindemith *Violin Concerto*, the scene from Gounod's *Mireille* sung by Angelici and a number of

others that I have not been able to find as yet in New York stores.

In 1777 Mozart wrote an oboe concerto in the key of C for the oboist Ferlandis, the score and parts of which soon disappeared from sight. In the following year he received a commission from the Dutch flutist de Jean for two concerti and four quartets. To save time that oboe concerto was transposed a tone higher and some extra ornamentation added. This became the *Flute Concerto in D*, K. 314, that you may remember from the Moyse recording (Victor set M-589, withdrawn). Several years ago the musicologist Dr. Paumgartner, while rummaging through some dusty archives, found a set of manuscript parts of the oboe concerto and reconstructed the score, which has since been published by Boosey & Hawkes.

For Mozart Enthusiasts

Evelyn Rothwell, who first performed the work at the Proms in 1948, has recorded the *Oboe Concerto in C* (also known as K. 314) with accompaniment from Sir John Barbirolli's Halle Orchestra (HMV C3954/5). Lady Barbirolli is a rather uneven performer at present. It is quite possible that the press of wifely duties has cut into her practice time, for she surely does not play so well as in the fine Brandenburg series made by the Busch players a number of years ago. However, Mozart fans should investigate this concerto despite the reported deficiencies; you may find you will want it anyway.

In another part of the magazine, I commiserated with harpists, deplored the paucity of worthwhile solo works for that instrument. In assessing the plight of the bassoonist, the same stand is very apropos. As a contribution to the elimination of this deficiency, the English bassoonist Gwydion Brooke offers us Weber's *Concerto for Bassoon in F, Opus 75* accompanied by the Liverpool Philharmonic under Sargent (Eng. Columbia DX1656/7). It is pretty much what one might expect, with some fat little tunes, many eyebrow-lifting showoff passages and very little honest depth. There is a certain amount of hokum in the score, but no more than in many popular violin concerti. Need I mention Bruch, Wieniawski, Tchaikovsky, and Viextemps.

Gwydion Brooke is, I have been told, the son of the composer Josef Holbrooke, who is remembered nowadays mainly as the author

of one of the few available saxophone concertos. Mr. Brooke has played first bassoon with the Hastings, B.B.C., Scottish, Liverpool Philharmonic and Royal Philharmonic Orchestras. He has a rather small, even tone, without a great deal of vibrato. His projection of the slow movement is most sensitive and agreeable. In fast passages, however, he has a tendency to fall into a sort of nervous jerkiness which detracts from the over-all melodic line. The image of his personality that one forms after listening to these discs is one of amused detachment, possibly because the orchestral accompaniment is so very bad. The Liverpool is one of England's poorest recording orchestras, mainly, I believe, because of the conductors assigned; on this particular occasion they are at their worst. Luckily the orchestra figures very little in the scoring, so that one can enjoy the soloist without too much distraction.

A Rhapsody for Band

Works scored for band are not often found on records. An interesting addition to the slender list of available pieces is Florent Schmitt's *Dionysiaques*, played by the Band of the Garde Républicaine under the direction of Pierre Dupont (French Columbia GFX 137/8). A French composer of Alsatian descent, Schmitt, now in his eightieth year, has never gained any popularity outside of France in spite of a long list of vigorous scores. He is probably best known for his choreographic drama *La Tragédie de Salomé*, an orchestral suite from which was once available played by the Straram Orchestra (Columbia set 157, withdrawn).

Dionysiaques is a lively impressionist rhapsody of no great originality employing the full resources of the instrumentalists at the composer's disposal. It is well played by one of the best bands in Europe and should have a wider audience than the students of band music that one might expect to seek it out. As an extra enticement or bonus dividend, the odd side contains a selection from *La Walkyrie* entitled *La Chevauchée*. This, of course, is nothing less than the infamous *Ride*, played with straight-faced solemnity.

A charming little disc that one might very well overlook in reading down a record catalog is Carl Nielsen's *Serenata in Vano*, scored for the unusual but highly effective combination of clarinet, bassoon, horn, cello and bass.

Played by a talented group of Danish artists (HMV DB5204), it is a tender, modest score, reminiscent in some ways of the moods of Mozart's serenades for small wind groups; yet actually written in a concise, personal style midway between impressionism and neo-classicism. The more I learn about Nielsen, the more I respect his abilities and wonder why he is so little known here.

Winner of the French magazine *Disques* 1949 Grand Prix in the chamber orchestra category was a recording of two suites for strings from John Blow's opera *Venus and Adonis* made by a small orchestra conducted by Anthony Lewis (Oiseau Lyre 153/4). As an example of seventeenth century stage music it is well made and solidly turned out. The tunes are not remarkable, the unrelieved sonorities of the string tone rather monotonous. On the whole I find it rather dull and definitely second-rate when compared to the efforts of Blow's gifted contemporary, Henry Purcell. I have heard sacred works of Blow, however, that were quite moving.

The Sebastian Bach *Concerto in G minor for Harpsichord*, actually the same score as the more familiar *Violin Concerto in A minor*, brings to our notice an excellent harpsichordist in George Malcolm, the Director of Music and Choirmaster at Westminster Cathedral. Accompanied by the London Chamber Orchestra under Anthony Bernard, its talented founder and conductor since 1921, Malcolm plays with taste and discretion on his Burkart Shudi harpsichord (HMV C3963/4). Even those of us who don't find the instrumental exercises of Bach especially enlivening are liable to be charmed by the collaboration of Malcolm and Bernard, two exceptionally sympathetic performers.

A New Baritone

A refreshingly different baritone voice is that of Hugo Hasslo, a Swedish singer of no mean range and volume, two of whose discs have reached us. With the Kungsholm Orchestra conducted by Nils Grevilus he sings *Cortigianai* (*Rigoletto*) and *Eri tu* (*Ballo in Maschera*) in Italian (HMV Z308) and *Scintille Diamant* (*Contes d'Hoffmann*) and *Avant de Quitter* (*Faust*) in Swedish (HMV Z309). Hasslo sounds like a baritone version of Bjoerling. His huge, liquid voice is produced in an astoundingly effortless manner. He soars up to the high tones in the Offenbach

aria without batting an eyelash. To judge by these samples, he still has a long road to travel before he can take his place as a matured and finished opera singer. His interpretations at present are more than a little naive, but not in any way that offends, for the simple glories of his organ overshadow all else.

There is a new company in France issuing records under the "Pacific" label. Some of their listings have intrigued me, but the first and only one of them I have been able to lay my hands on is a *Divertimento for flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon and piano* by Albert Roussel, Opus 6. It is played by an instrumental ensemble of the Paris Conservatory (foreign section) (Pacific 3354/5) under the direction of the ubiquitous Oubradous. Careful scrutiny of the names listed brings to light the fact that these players are Americans studying in Paris under the G.I. Bill. They play competently, if not brilliantly, the sturdy, unaffected score of Roussel, which is in much the same style and mood as his *Serenade, Op. 30 for harp and chamber group*, at one time recorded by Pierre Jamet (Voix de son Maître DB11124/5). On the odd side is a contest piece for bassoon and piano composed by the indefatigable Oubradous, played with the requisite deference by A. Rabot and F. Boury, apparently not ex-G.I.s.

—A.W.P.

EDITORIAL NOTES

(Continued from page 349)

"I think you should know that Vic's experience with LPs has been limited to several evenings at my home listening to a number of LP records on various labels on my set-up. Now, my equipment is regrettably somewhat inferior, consisting of a \$19.95 (Canadian price, too) LP player reproducing through a 1940 General Electric console radio with a single 12" speaker.

"For my part, I am heartily in favor of the LP system. However, I cannot share the enthusiasm of yourself and others for the 45 rpm disc. For shorter selections, the 7" microgroove record should be the answer. Why three speeds, when two are sufficient? I am happy to find that Victor has turned to LPs and will look forward to buying many of its issues.

"As for 78 rpm records, I daresay their future is limited in North America due to the inferior production of these discs over a period of years. Nearly all of my 78s are on British and European pressings which are readily available here."

From England comes a letter from the far-seeing Managing Director, Mr. Fred Smith, of Rimington, Van Wyck, Ltd. in London. Mr. Smith says: "I find the new long playing Decca records quite wonderful. These should be excellent business and a resurrection of the Gramophone industry."

At long last, LP has invaded England, and we feel certain that countless British record enthusiasts are going to find their enjoyment of symphonies, operas, chamber works, etc., greatly enhanced by uninterrupted performance.

Harmonics Better on LP

In the May issue of *The American Organist* Mr. E. Power Biggs presents some interesting comments on LP reproduction in relation to the organ.

"If the long-playing records are played with a good magnetic pickup, such as the G.E. or Pickering," says Mr. Biggs, "the result is usually better than the 78 r.p.m. shellac records. For two reasons: the high-fidelity harmonics are better preserved in the 33 r.p.m., and the surface noise is almost completely absent. Thus having the harmonics preserved better in the LP, one does not need the treble-control turned full up, as is usually necessary with the 78 r.p.m. shellac discs; LPs are designed to be played with the treble control only about halfway up, even if that."

Those who have record compensation need not worry about treble or bass controls; they simply turn to the proper compensation for Columbia recordings (NAB curve) and sit back and enjoy the full-frequency range in the record. We need, however, a good pickup for LPs, as Mr. Biggs says, for "if there is any difference in the final sound of the LPs compared to the 78, it is probably because the latter are played through a better pickup [italics ours]."

Mr. Biggs points out that the economy of LPs quickly pays for the new playing-equipment, and rightfully states, "Best of all, there is the continuity of playing."

LP Re-Issues

RCA VICTOR HAS AT LONG LAST sent us a group of recently released LP re-issues. Two of these, containing performances by Toscanini and the NBC Symphony Orchestra, deserve immediate attention in view of our present survey of the maestro and his music-making on records.

LM-6, a 10" disc has the maestro's performances of Schumann's *Manfred Overture* and Beethoven's *Consecration of the House Overture*, while LM-1030, a 12" disc, links his renditions of the Mozart *Jupiter Symphony* and the Mozart *Concerto in B flat for Bassoon and Orchestra*. A marked difference in recording technique makes the two overtures poor companions in performance when heard together. Toscanini's feeling for the Schumann is warm and expressive, romantic in feeling without excessive sentiment. Moreover, he clarifies the often criticized scoring of the composer in a wonderful way. The recorded sound of the orchestra is resonant and full, and really mellow in tone. This recording was made in Carnegie Hall under what would seem ideal circumstances. The Beethoven overture, recorded in Studio 8-H, has the characteristic tightness of string tone associated with that studio. Moreover, the interpretation lacks warmth and its festal and majestic qualities are sacrificed to an exploitation of conductorial skill, which while often breathtaking in its technical ingenuity leaves one without any feeling of having been welcomed to a "consecration of the house."

Toscanini's "Jupiter"

Toscanini's performance of the Mozart *Jupiter* has been damned as too rigid and literal, yet it remains the best on records. His pacing is just throughout and his interpretation of the slow movement remains, in our estimation, unexcelled in our time for its subtle shadings and fine etching of line and phrase. The contrasts in the opening movement are excellently achieved, with an appropriate feeling for grace as well as drama. The finale is magnificently handled. This recording was made in Carnegie Hall. The

performance of the *Bassoon Concerto* is completely disappointing. Toscanini reveals no especial feeling for the score, and treats it too seriously and objectively. The soloist, Leonard Sharow, in many places can do little else than tootle with the pace set by the conductor. The spirited amiability of this music is lost in this performance and one returns to the old Oubradous-Bigot version in Victor set 704 to relax and enjoy the music as the composer intended us to do.

A Splendid Recording

One of the surprises in Victor's recent LP re-issues is the disc containing de Sabata's fine performances of Respighi's *The Fountains of Rome* and Debussy's *Jeux* (LM-1057). Back in December 1947, we cited de Sabata's issue of the Respighi score as one of the finest extended-range recordings we had heard to date. What we said then holds good today: "The tonal radiance, nuance and dynamic realism of the reproduction gives the impression on a good machine of opening the door to a concert hall." This LP version is a vast improvement over the 45. Where musical values are concerned the Debussy score has much more to offer, for it is one of the French composer's finest works. But let it be said, Respighi's colorful impressionistic music asks for realistic treatment in reproduction to sustain the listener's interest. These works are, to say the least, odd companions, linked undoubtedly because both were performed by de Sabata and the Symphony Orchestra of the Augusteo, Rome.

What was one of Victor's finest recordings of the past year, the *Ballet Suite* from Copeland's *Billy the Kid*, performed by Leonard Bernstein and the RCA Victor Orchestra, is equally as fine in its LP version as in its 45 and 78 releases. It is coupled with Gershwin's *An American in Paris*, also splendidly recorded, the best performance available to date on records. Bernstein and the same orchestra are the performers. (disc LM 1031).

At long last Koussevitzky's unexcelled traversal of Mendelssohn's *Italian Symphony* comes to us in an LP version (Victor 10" disc LM-20). The sound of the LP version is satisfactory though the 45 version boasted a slight margin in brightness on the high end. But, as one Boston reader says, "This argument about English recording being better than American suggests that someone has

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never heard and compared the Boston Symphony Orchestra in Symphony Hall and on records. As it sounds in concert, so does it sound on records, woodwind quality *et al.*"

For String Quality

The re-issue of the Rodzinski-Chicago Symphony performance of Mendelssohn's *Scotch Symphony* (disc LM-1053) is equally as welcome as the re-issue of the *Italian Symphony*. For Rodzinski gives this favorite work of ours a musically reading and the reproduction is splendid. It is a joy to the ear to hear the quality of string tone encountered in this recording. The same thing can be said of the conductor's traversal of Wagner's *Prelude and Love Death* from *Tristan and Isolde*, as heard from Victor LP disc LM-1060. There is more compulsion and poetic feeling in Rodzinski's Wagner than his Mendelssohn, but the quality of sound that Victor engineering has obtained facilitates matters. Coupled with the Wagner is the conductor's performance of Strauss's tone poem, *Also Sprach Zarathustra*. Again recording quality redeems a rather apathetic performance in which contrast is badly needed to make the music as vital as Koussevitzky made it. Though Victor's engineers tell us a bass turn-over of 500 cps is employed in all its LPs we found the use of a 300 turnover better suited to these Chicago Symphony recordings and most of the others. It gives more body to the sound. An engineer of our acquaintance informs us that room characteristics may make for this seeming phenomena. However, in all other cases the correct turnover employed by the different companies is found to be best in our living room. (The size of this room is 28 by 16 feet, and the position of the speaker screen is in a corner at the long end. The latter employs three speakers — an Altec woofer, a W.E. 12" middle speaker, and the University tweeter system for highs.)

The test of really first-rate LP reproduction centers around the piano, which has offered plenty of problems to the best engineers. Pitch wavers at the low speed of 33 rpm are most noticeable in piano music. On the Victor side of the fence, where we are told the technical boys have the last word over the musical ones, the abilities of the former are strikingly revealed in the re-issues

of Prokofieff's *Concerto No. 3* and Liszt's *Mephisto Waltz* (LM-1058). William Kapell's performance of both works is that of a most proficient technician. These young people of today like to exploit technique, and Kapell has an incisive tonal quality and the fingers that can cope with most problems. The LP version of these works hasn't a waver at any turn of the table on our Rek-O-Kut motor. Dorati and the Dallas Symphony Orchestra match the young pianist in a brilliant and incisive reading of Prokofieff's most popular piano concerto. This was, and still is, a top drawer recording job from the House of Victor.

Beecham's "Heldenleben"

The honor of Beecham is vindicated in the LP re-issue of his notable performance of Strauss's tone poem, *Ein Heldenleben*. The noted Baronet rightfully claimed that the 45 issue had distortions in it that were not in the original H.M.V. 78-rpm pressing. Beecham's reading of this work is the most musically satisfying of all extant versions on records. A careful study of the score as well as listening of the recording leaves us unable to concur with those who say that Beecham is overly reserved. He simply does not shoot his bolt at the beginning as Mengelberg does and he certainly does not distort phrases and dynamics just to get climactic effects unindicated in the score. If the interested reader will take the trouble to carefully listen to the opening section introducing the hero, he will note that Beecham gives dignity to the character. His is no swaggering, boastful hero as Mengelberg conceives him. Strauss planned the first section to build to a notable climax at its termination. This Beecham accomplishes. Mengelberg begins bombastically, knocks off climactic effects unindicated and breaks the rhythmic flow each time, and before he's halfway through the first section the effect of the build-up is lost. He flounders for a time until the composer gives him the opportunity to attain new climactic loudness and bombast at the end of the section. Beecham lends dignity and true nobility to this controversial score of Strauss. Of course, there is a break — LP has not reached the 40 minute mark as yet — but the break is sustainable, for even in the concert hall a slight hiatus in this score would be welcome.

(Continued on page 380)

Record Notes and Reviews



GHERE IS IN SOULS a sympathy with sounds, — and as the mind is pitched the ear is pleased — with melting airs, or martial, brisk, or grave, some chord in unison with what we hear — is touched within us and the heart replies.

Orchestra

BACH: *Brandenburg Concerto No. 1 in F*; **Boston Symphony Orchestra** conducted by **Serge Koussevitzky**. RCA Victor set WDM-1362, three 7" discs, \$3.35.

▲WITH this recording, Koussevitzky has satisfied his desire to record all of the Brandenburg Concertos. As a performance and a recording, it is a shade superior to its five companions. While it is just as rhythmically stolid and as uninspired in phraseology as Koussevitzky's performances of Bach's music have always seemed to me to be, this performance is noteworthy for the texture of its sound. It is light, clean, transparent — an altogether admirable bit of balancing.

On the odd side of this set is a good, spirited rendering of Mozart's *Overture to La Clemenza di Tito*. The Bostonians play both Bach and Mozart with their familiar beauty of tone and polished execution. The good recording, which was accomplished at Tanglewood, is better than most of the others that have been made there. The surfaces are first class.

—C.J.L.

BLISS: *Miracle in the Gorbals* — *Ballet Suite*. **ADAM:** *Giselle* — *Ballet Music* (Arranged by Constant Lambert). **Orchestra of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden**, conducted by **Constant Lambert**. Columbia 10" LP ML-2117, \$3.85.

▲**MIRACLE IN THE GORBALS** was seen for the first time in America during the

Sadler's Wells Ballet engagement at the Metropolitan Opera House last fall. The work of Arthur Bliss, composer, and Robert Helpmann, choreographer, *Miracle* is set in a notorious slum section of Glasgow. A young girl commits suicide (a common occurrence) but a Stranger appears and brings her back to life. The people in the district first respond to the Stranger by worshipping him. Later they revile him until finally he is brutally murdered. (Helpmann has said that he wished to show in terms of dramatic ballet just what would happen if the Savior were to reappear on earth.) The ballet's dramatic situation together with the fact that a clergyman is instrumental in bringing about the Stranger's murder caused as much as anything the sharply divided opinion among those who attended the first American performance.

When I first saw the work, I felt that the power of the dramatic idea and some of the choreography (and not the music) had been the sources of the ballet's animation. Rehearing this suite of *Miracle in the Gorbals* in an effective traversal by Constant Lambert and his men makes Bliss' work seem lamer than ever. It appears to me to be nothing more than a civilized collection of tired dramatic clichés rather poorly orchestrated.

Lambert's previous, issued performance of Adam's alternately faded and imaginative score for the famous ballet, *Giselle*, is expert. Its appearance on an LP will be especially welcome to those who want uninterrupted hearings of ballet's *Hamlet*.

—C.J.L.

BORODIN (arr. Rimsky-Korsakoff): *Prince Igor* — *Polovtsian Dances*; **London Philharmonic Orchestra and Choir** conducted by **Eduard Van Beinum**. **FALLA:** *El Amor Brujo* — *Suite*; **London Philhar-**

monic Orchestra conducted by **Anthony Collins**. London LP disc LLP 203, \$5.85.

▲**THERE ARE THOSE** who like their music without words and vice versa — it's like coffee and tea and some stronger drinks. Tastes do vary even if it means altering the pattern of the composer. Here we have music with and without. I wonder if this will serve to advantage the greater number on either side of the fence. However, the *ffrr* technique serves both of these scores auspiciously — everything is as clear as a bell. The highs are very bright and there is more than a suggestion that the woodwinds have their own microphone pickup which makes them very realistic indeed.

A couple of years ago, English Decca gave us a firstrate recording without voices of the *Polovtsian Dances*, played by the same orchestra directed by Gregor Fitelberg. Logically, this should have been the backup of the voiceless *El Amor Brujo*. I'm not complaining about this firstrate version of the dances with a reasonably good choir; rather I'm thinking of those who will want the de Falla without words. Someday, I hope Beecham will duplicate his earlier performance of the Borodin with choir, as his invigorating spirit brings the right contrast between the lyrical girl choruses and the vigorous male choral passages. While Van Beinum plays the lyrical section with real beauty, he does not add fire to the dramatic sections. Yet this is a most musicianly treatment of the score, rhythmically buoyant throughout.

An English reviewer was kicking recently when a performance of a wordless suite from de Falla's *El Amor Brujo*, performed by the National Symphony Orchestra conducted by Enrique Jordà, was issued by English Decca. "It seems a pity that there should be *two* complete American versions, while we get only so far and no farther." For the Americans, English Decca imports another wordless suite by one of the most talented English conductors, Anthony Collins, formerly a leading viola player in English orchestras. Collins is most successful in the more poetic sections of the score — *The Magic Circle* being a case in point. His incisive treatment of the *Ritual Fire Dance* is the work of a proficient musician, but it lacks the imagination of Reiner's version. Columbia's LP version of the complete *El Amor Brujo* with the dark

voiced Carol Brice has more fascination for me.

On the other hand, the present performance of the *Polovtsian Dances*, despite the fact that I cannot decide what language is used by the singers, appeals to me because I think the music fares best with the voices. Moreover, it gives me legitimate reason to replace two 78 discs for an LP. —J.N.

BORODIN (trans. Stokowski): *Prince Igor* —*Dances of the Polovetski Maidens*; **Leopold Stokowski** and his Symphony Orchestra with Women's Chorus; and **FALLA: El Amor Brujo**; **Nan Merriman** (mezzo-soprano) with **Hollywood Bowl Symphony Orchestra** conducted by **Leopold Stokowski**. Victor LP disc LM-1054, \$5.45.

▲**THE BORODIN** selection is, I believe, a new recording. The transcription by Stokowski is rather freely made, beginning with the chorus of the women at the opening of Act II (this is no dance), continuing with the instrumental dance, with which Van Beinum prefaces his performance, and following with the choral dances, also played by Van Beinum. Stokowski employs only the women's voices. In those dances using the men, he prefers the orchestra alone. I miss the men's voices which would give real punch to the music.

As a recording this has none of the radiance of the Van Beinum. There are some beautiful sounds but an overall lack of brilliance. Stokowski's beat is less incisive than Van Beinum's and his free use of retards is disturbing to the rhythmic flow in the earlier sections.

The de Falla is a re-issue. I recall a bit more brightness in the original 78 issue, but this is a smooth enough LP job. Again Stokowski's hand technique fails to produce the incisive rhythmic impulses of Reiner's and Anthony's baton technique. Nan Merriman's singing is thoroughly musicianly but it lacks the dark luscious beauty of Carol Brice's. Neither of these issues woos me from others I have already endorsed. —J.N.

CHOPIN: Les Sylphides (Ballet Music); L'Orchestre de la Société des Concerts du Conservatoire de Paris conducted by Roger Desormiere. London 10" LP disc LPS 192, \$4.95.

▲**APART** from the theater, I have never

liked this ballet suite because Chopin orchestrated seems completely false to the idiomatic quality of the music. But listening to this recording, I was fascinated with the delicacy and strength of Desormière's traversal of the score, his fluent rhythms and his subtle use of rubati. This distinguished French conductor has been praised for the luminosity of musical texture he achieves and surely it is that, as much as anything else, that brought me unexpected enjoyment of music to which I have never previously lent a willing ear in reproduction. The recording is consistently clear, mellow and bright in tone.

—P.H.R.

DEBUSSY (freely transcribed by Stokowski): *Clair de lune*; **Leopold Stokowski and his Orchestra**. Victor 7" disc 49-1009, 95c (also 10" disc 10-1534, \$1.00).

▲STOKOWSKI'S orchestration and treatment of this overly familiar piano piece suggests a clouded moonlit scene in a graveyard. The tempo is on the slow side (most piano performances take only one 12" face). The break is disturbing and annoying, and the recording is by no means as fine as some of the earlier discs from the same ensemble.

—P.G.

DUKAS: *L'Apprenti Sorcier*; **GLINKA**: *Russian and Ludmilla* — Overture; **CHARBRIER**: *Danse Slave* from *Le Roi malgré lui*; **L'Orchestre de la Société des Concerts du Conservatoire de Paris** conducted by **Enrique Jordà**. London 10" LP disc LPS 193, \$4.95.

▲A SPARKLING PERFORMANCE and recording of the Dukas *Scherzo* in which the conductor's handling of the unflagging humor and brilliance of the music's development is particularly rewarding. The tale of the mischievous and lazy sorcerer's apprentice who tried his master's magic with the broom only to find himself unable to stop the broom's busy water-carrying recalls Disney's near-drowning of Mickey Mouse. Neither Goethe or Dukas could have thought of Mickey, but it proved one of Disney's happiest thoughts. Jordà gave us an earlier performance, recorded by English Decca's *ffrr* technique in 1947, but the orchestral playing was not on a par with the present. Moreover, this recording seems even better with its extraordinary clarity of instrumentation.

The Glinka overture, which receives a bright, eager performance, seems a bit of an intrusion in this short program. One wishes Jordà had given us more of Chabrier. Though the *Fête Polonoise* — also from *Le Roi malgré lui* — was given a fine reading by Monteux last fall, it would have logically fitted into this LP program, and proved a more ideal companion to the *Danse Slave*. The latter is another engaging example of the buoyant Chabrier's superb orchestral work. Jordà tends to terminate his phrases in this music more tautly than Monteux did in the other piece, but in this realistic recording the music-making is very much alive and engaging.

—P.H.R.

GRIEG: *Holberg Suite*, Op. 40 and *Cow-keeper's Tune and Country Dance*, Op. 63; **Boyd Neel String Orchestra** conducted by **Boyd Neel**. London 10" LP LPS-173, \$4.95.

▲WHEN the Scandinavians paid tribute in 1884 to the 200th anniversary of the birth of Ludwig Holberg, one of the most distinguished European scholars in history, Grieg was commissioned to write a work for the occasion. The *Holberg Suite* written in "ye olden style" was the result.

The *Holberg Suite* is perhaps the high point of Grieg's career. In no other work did the Norwegian lyricist build such a sturdy construction to frame his delicate, small-scale beauties. Alternate moods of sweet melancholy and airy gaiety predominate throughout.

Boyd Neel leads this work and two of the *Norwegian Melodies* with sensitivity and affection. The recording is extraordinarily natural, especially in its preservation of all the dynamic contrasts. The surfaces are quiet.

—C.J.L.

HAYDN: *Symphony No. 22 in E flat (Philosopher)*; and *Symphony No. 35 in B flat; Vienna Symphony Orchestra* conducted by **Jonathan Sternberg**. Haydn Society LP disc 1009, \$5.95. **HAYDN: Symphony No. 82 in B flat; Vienna Symphony Orchestra** conducted by **Mr. Sternberg**, and *Symphony No. 85 in B flat (La Reine)*; **Orchestra of the Vienna State Opera** conducted by **Erwin Baltzer**. Haydn Society LP disc 1008, \$5.95.

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▲ The Haydn Society has given us a valued group of recorded symphonies, but none which as a group have proved as immediately arresting as these four. It is at once a matter of interpretative skill and, as in the case of the Vienna Symphony performances, the fine quality of the recording. The reproduction of the Vienna State Opera offering suggests a radio studio pickup; the quality of the string tone being less mellow and resonant. Mr. Sternberg's performances, unquestionably better prepared and rehearsed than usual, have appreciable expressive feeling, vigor and rhythmic surety. Mr. Baltzer, while lacking some of the youthful fervor of his companion, performs with fluency and refinement.

The subtitles to Haydn's symphonies were not of his devising. *The Philosopher* (No. 22) gets its title from the long *adagio* in the opening movement in which Haydn employs the *canto fermo* technique. This profound and moving chorale sounds a depth rarely heard from its composer, but surely this is more a religious than a philosophical mood. The balance of the symphony, comprising a short *presto*, a *menuetto*, and a swift moving *finale*, represents the more elative side of Haydn. The *B flat* (No. 35) is full of melodic joyfulness. The annotator thinks Haydn was "momentarily captivated by the sunny, melodic sounds of Italy and" (at the same time) casting "an eye towards the rich orchestral effects of the more subtle Mannheim school." These scholars hear more than most listeners do. I fail to note any real Latin melodic content. Rather I hear the sunny, bucolic qualities so familiar to Haydn. Sufice it to say, there is not a dull moment in the work. Its rhythmic vitality culminates in one of those joyous and irresistible Haydn finales. The use of the cembalo in both these symphonies conjures pictures of the composer conducting from the keyboard.

Symphonies No. 82 and No. 85, belonging to a group of six composed in 1785 and 1786 for the Paris musical society, *Les Concerts de la Loge Olympique*, are the forerunners of the famous dozen that Haydn later wrote for the Salomon concerts at London.

The Bear (No. 82) receives its name because of the bass growls at the beginning of the *finale*, a sort of bagpipe dance. Vigor and dramatic compulsion characterize this work, even the *minuet* has an imposing self-im-

portance unlike the usual Haydn dance. Only the gentle *allegretto* suggests a momentarily restrained spirit. The *finale* is a superb dramatic piece of writing, more swift and agile than the clumsy bear. The neglect of this symphony is incomprehensible.

No. 85, called *The Queen*, was the favorite of Marie Antoinette, perhaps because its second movement was based on an old French song. From a majestic introduction, Haydn leaps into an alluring *vivace* with an "extremely subtle theme." The charm of the romantic second movement is retained in the *minuet* with its gracious, lilting rhythm. The *finale* is gay and festive, another elative triumph for the composer who liked to send his audiences home, more often than not, in a happy frame of mind.

—P.H.R.

MOZART: *Serenade for Orchestra in D, K. 320 (Posthorn Serenade); Helmut Wobitzch (posthorn) and Orchestra of the Vienna State Opera conducted by Jonathan Sternberg.* Haydn Society 12" LP disc HSLP 1012, \$5.95.

▲ I SHOULD IMAGINE there are a number of people who, like myself, were charmed with the two previously recorded movements of this work (the "posthorn minuet" and finale, played by an orchestra under Robert Heger on Decca 25781, long since withdrawn) and wondered if the other five sections were of the same calibre. It is my pleasant duty to report that they are. The piece is a complete delight from start to finish and on a par with the best of Mozart's more intimate writings.

The posthorn is a valveless instrument (straight or oblong-coiled in England, circular-coiled on the continent), the granddaddy of

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the cornet. It was used by mail coach guards to announce the impending arrival of the mail along the route. The once-famous *Posthorn Galop* of Koenig, a lively air traditionally the final number at a party because it was so exhausting to dance, was played on a straight posthorn that came to be known as the Koenigshorn. The finest posthorn playing I have heard was by Corporal W. G. Banning, accompanied by the Band of H.M. Marines, Plymouth Division. On HMV disc B.9014 Corporal Banning performs the Koenig piece plus a flashy atmospheric solo based on hunting themes.

One might wonder about the validity of Mozart's stunt of including such an unorthodox instrument in the hallowed precincts of the formal orchestra. Whatever the provocation, the wistful quality of its choked tones has just the right touch of nostalgia for the one movement in which it is employed, a fleeting moment of glory for an instrument that is now little more than a museum piece.

Sternberg has gained experience and confidence since his original releases for the Haydn Society. He still has a tendency to skim over some of the juicier portions of the score and to take the line of least resistance in molding a phrase. This is a good job, just the same, and the recording engineers have countered with clean, faithful reproduction.

—A.W.P.

MOZART: *Symphony No. 33 in B Flat, K.319; Boston Symphony Orchestra* conducted by Serge Koussevitzky. RCA Victor set WDM-1369, three 7" discs, \$3.35.

▲SERGE KOUSSEVITZKY, the Boston Orchestra, and the RCA Victor engineers have combined their talents and energies to advantage.

Koussevitzky's reading is justly paced and appropriately expressive. Except for a few dynamic exaggerations, it seems an accurate and effective statement of Mozart's lovely, neglected *Symphony No. 33*. The Bostonians play with their accustomed elegance of execution suffusing Mozart's music with a fiery white flame of beauty that is altogether fitting.

The recording is first class and the surfaces exceptionally quiet. The odd side of this set features a good performance of Mozart's overture to his superb opera, *Idomeneo*.

—C.J.L.

MUSIC OF SPAIN: *La Vida Breve — Spanish Dance (de Falla); Spanish Dance No. 2 (Oriental), Spanish Dance No. 5 (Andaluza), Spanish Dance No. 6 (Rondalla) (Granadas); La Procession del Rocio (Turina); El Puerto and Triana from Iberia Suite (Albanez-Arbo); L'Orchestre de la Société du Conservatoire de Paris conducted by Enrique Jorda.* London LP disc LLP 191, \$5.95.

▲A GALA, festive program from the sunny, brightly colored land of Spain. Were these compositions half as well played as they are, this disc would intrigue countless listeners who place realistic recording values before those of musical ones. For English Decca engineers have embraced the holiday spirit and provided vivid and tonally brilliant reproduction. Triangles, cymbals, bells, celesta, castanets, all the instruments that tinkled lightly in the past, have a true "presence" that will delight the listener.

Enrique Jorda, at present permanent conductor of the Symphony Orchestra of Cape-town, Union of South Africa, is a knowing interpreter of the music of his native land. He has the true "feel" of the Iberian rhythmic details and he knows when and how to exploit color and flamboyance. His tendency, on occasion, to clip his phrases can be traced to his knowledge of the guitar imitations with which all these composers were imbued in part. Though the late Enrique Arbos often achieved an evocative poetic feeling which is not matched here, this is skillful music-making, right up Mr. Jorda's alley, and he very definitely conveys his enjoyment in the proceedings.

The *Spanish Dance* of de Falla receives its best reproduction in performance to date. It is a wholly original piece in which the composer expresses the letter rather than the spirit of Spanish music. The Granados dances were originally piano pieces, and the keyboard style — as the annotator of the notes states — shows through the orchestrations. Each dance employs certain specific characteristics of the country: No. 2 showing the Moorish influence in Spanish culture; No. 5 the rhythmic patterns of the province of Andaluza; and No. 6 those of the province of Aragon.

Considering the poor quality of sound from the old Arbos version of the Turina *Procession of the Dew*, a musical transcription

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of an event which takes place in June of each year in the Triana suburb of Seville honoring the Virgin, this new one is most welcome. But I cannot help but wish that Jorda had given us all five of the Arbos orchestral transcriptions on one LP disc instead of just the two included here. *Triana* is a tone picture of the gypsy quarter of Spain while *El Puerto* is a tone picture of the mountain portal of the old robber hands. The first has an irresistible swing, a sensuous suggestiveness, while in the latter "the rhythm runs in the quick decisive trots of mules," suggesting the descent of the robbers to the high road from Seville to Cadiz where they waylaid travellers.

—P.H.R.

RAVEL: *Rapsodie Espagnole*; and **KODALY:** *Hary Janos Suite*; **The Philadelphia Orchestra** conducted by **Eugene Ormandy**. Columbia LP disc ML 4306, \$4.85. (also 78 sets MX-342 and MM-912).

▲**SOME ORCHESTRAL SUITES** from operas obscure their source. One could cite quite a few examples from Purcell down to the present day composers. I have never heard anyone in this country suggest a revival of Kodály's *buffo* folk opera, from which this suite was arranged, but conductor's continually program the latter. Of all conductors, Ormandy seems to have allied himself most closely with this work, and his performance is a full savoring of its naively humorous and picturesque musical content. János is the village teller of tall tales, a former Hussar, who knows how to elaborate and invent a yarn. At the beginning of his story-telling he ejects a huge sneeze (the music deftly paraphrases this sneeze at the start of the suite). There is a Hungarian belief that whatever is said after a sneeze must be regarded as the truth. Old Hárý thus disperses his critics, and proceeds to spin yarns about the famous Musical Clock at the imperial palace in Vienna, the longing of himself and his village sweetheart in Vienna for their village home, the battle and defeat of Napoleon in which the latter is forced to engage in person the invincible Hárý, and finally the march of triumph of the Austrian Emperor and his royal court. Between the last two tales, Kodály intersperses with a dance intermezzo — a *czardas*. While the new recording of this suite (made in 1948) has wider range than the older one (made in 1934), it lacks the overall clarity of more recent Philadelphia

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recordings. However, its inclusion of the Hungarian cimbalom (not used in the older recording) adds an authentic note which is fascinating. It is an instrument that belongs in music of this kind which owes its inspiration to the composer's long interest in Hungarian folklore and folk music.

The contrast in recording between the two sides of this disc is startling to say the least. The Ravel is one of the finest of the Philadelphia Orchestra heard to date, suggesting different microphone technique. For this reason, it is unfortunate that Ormandy is far less sympathetic to this music than to the Kodály score. He misses the atmosphere of warm languor in the Prelude and much of the subtle poetic essence of the dances and the final *Feria*. One returns to the Koussevitzky performance, for he alone seems to "put himself into the same emotional mood as that which inspired the conductor," which as one authority on French music contends is the only way to interpret Ravel's music. Ormandy seems more concerned with the technical aspects of the ingenious and colorful orchestration. The excellent balance of timbres and the superb recording, however, give a certain distinction to his interpretation.

—P.H.R.

RIMSKY-KORSAKOFF: *Symphonietta on Russian Themes*, and **DVORAK:** *Slavonic Rhapsody No. 2 in G minor, Op. 45, No. 2*; **Vienna Symphony Orchestra** conducted by **Henry Swoboda**. Westminster LP disc WL 50-8, \$5.95.

▲NEITHER of these scores ranks among the major works of their composers. This symphonietta was first conceived as a string quartet. Rimsky-Korsakoff, in his autobiography, tells us the latter "never had a performance in public." It was played once at a quartet rehearsal at the home of a musician friend but did not please the players very much, and the composer found many shortcomings in it himself.

The quartet had four movements, but the fourth being based on a church tune was dropped when Rimsky revised the others for this opus. There are three movements, the first a *Pastorale*, the second an *Adagio*, and the last a *Round Dance and Song*. The annotator, Irving Kolodin, turns tune detective and presents some interesting facts on the first and second movements. The main theme of the first is reminiscent of the opening theme of Beethoven's *Pastoral Symphony*, and the

Russian folk tune on which Rimsky bases his main theme for the *Adagio* is the same song which Stravinsky used for the *Ronde des Princesses* in his *L'Oiseau de Feu*. The finale is typical of its composer in a rowdy mood even its scoring is on the blatant side. All in all, only a mildly diverting score that is given a straightforward performance and a first-rate recording save for a few pitch wavers.

Dvorak's three *Slavonic Rhapsodies* were heady hang-overs from the first set of *Slavonic Dances*. Most of the composer's biographers treat them unfavorably. The redoubtable Tovey, however, thought well enough of two, Nos. 1 and 3, to perform them and to write program notes about them. But his tongue is in his cheek: "Dvorak's three *Slavonic Rhapsodies* show his naive genius in its most amiable light, when his mastery and inventiveness had already attained ripeness and the world had not yet told him how naive he was." Some years ago, Beecham recorded No. 3 in *A flat major* which is the best of the set though like the others too long for its greater good. Alec Robertson in his excellent book on Dvorak says of No. 2, "there is more punch in the *G minor*, but here again Dvorak takes the easy way out of any real development by introducing an amiable waltz tune." Tunes aplenty abound in this music, but they are like leaves tossed about by an errant breeze. One gets only a fleeting impression of their attractiveness. Conductor Swoboda, a Czech by birth, plays this music with spirit and evident relish. The resonant recording is all to the good.

—P.H.R.

SAMMARTINI, G. B.: *Concerto Grosso, Op. 11, No. 4*; **PERGOLESI:** *Trio Sonata with String Orchestra*; **CORELLI:** *Concerto Grosso, Op. 6, No. 9*; **Vienna Symphony Orchestra** conducted by **Rudolf Moralt**. Westminster LP disc WL 50-9, \$5.95.

▲THREE early 18th-century works delightfully performed and well recorded. The orchestra, employing the cembalo, responds well to the direction of a conductor who senses the need for spirited treatment in music that is too often handled apathetically. Giovanni Battista Sammartini (1701-1775), not unjustly regarded as a symphonic precursor of Haydn, had a flair for instrumental coloration and drama, as this *Concerto Grosso* shows. Haydn, who was said to have come under his influence, resented the assertion, and prompt-

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ly called Sammartini a "dauber." Coloration in music was not favored at this time, though Handel showed some knowledge of its usefulness. The annotator compares this work with the music of Handel. But it is doubtful that Sammartini was influenced by his contemporary. In his own right, Sammartini was a master of chamber music, and actually this concerto grosso belongs in that category. Melodically, this opus has grace and feeling; its contrapuntal lines are well woven with all the tricks of the trade known in its day. Its transparent structure is a characteristic quality of its composer. It is in two movements, a spirited opening prefaced by a noble *Andante* introduction and a *tempo di menuetto* which takes on the characteristics of a song. A lot of listeners are going to find this work pleasant listening.

Pergolesi's so-called *Trio Sonata* has agreeable melodic qualities but formally it is far less interesting. A short work, it forms a satisfying respite between the more elaborate Sammartini and the classical Corelli.

Corelli was no minor master, though temperamentally he was not as ardorous as some of his contemporaries. In his day, his *concerti grossi* were regarded as perfect examples of musical art and classical style. The present work is no exception. Alfred Einstein has pointed out that "the harmonic symmetry of a work by Corelli, the construction of and relationship between two dissimilar tonal masses of sound are brought to perfection." This becomes self-evident when we listen to the present concerto grosso, in which the solo instrumental parts are far better contrasted and handled than in the Sammartini and Pergolesi works. This opus shows Corelli's nobility of utterance in its opening *Prelude* and its *Adagio* movement and his ability to handle dance forms in a true concerto manner.

—P.H.R.

SATIE: *Parade*. AURIC: *Suite from Les Malelols*; Houston Symphony Orchestra conducted by Efrem Kurtz. Columbia 10" LP ML-2112, \$3.85.

▲ GETTING RECORDINGS of fresh music of good quality in the summertime is always an unexpected pleasure. Record companies, for as long as I can remember, have always seemed to conduct their business with the firm belief that serious music listeners' brains dry up when the weather gets hot. That

Columbia, for the nonce, has deviated from this common practice and given us an LP containing the first orchestral recording of Satie's masterful music for the realistic ballet, *Parade*, and of Auric's moderately engaging *Suite from Les Malelols* (now available on discs for the first time) is cause for rejoicing.

A recording of the original orchestral score of *Parade* has long been due. An instantaneous success when it was first produced in 1917, this ballet (a Satie-Massine-Picasso product) with its descriptive action called forth Satie's most remarkable gifts. Set in Paris on a Sunday, the ballet is about the free entertainment offered by a small touring troupe to induce spectators to pay for a ticket to the full show that is to be given later. The "acts" shown are those of a Chinese conjurer, "the little American girl," and two acrobats. Satie's ability to create music that suggests every movement in the dance action and that keeps its expressivity objective is exceptionally uncommon. That there is a plentiful variety of interesting invention in addition makes *Parade*, like the other outstanding compositions of this much neglected French master, a work of art worthy of being ranked "among the major musical values of our century."

Georges Auric, born in 1899, is known these days mostly for his film scores. However, like many other modern composers, he did some of his earliest work in the theatre. *Les Malelols*, created in 1925 by Massine and Auric for the Ballet Russe, concerns the fidelity of a sailor and his girl. The score is solidly made and handsomely orchestrated. Expressively it is overly sentimental and does not entirely avoid a subjectivity that makes some of the work to me a trifle banal. A completely objective sentiment would have made Auric's music in my opinion more pleasing esthetically and more efficient as expression.

The performances given both of these works seem quite satisfactory. Efrem Kurtz, well remembered for his work with various ballet companies, conducts effectively and the Houston Symphony Orchestra plays very well indeed. The recording is no more than adequate.

—C.J.L.

SCHOENBERG: *Kammersymphonies, Op. 9; Orchestre Concerts Pas De Loup* conducted by Pierre Dervaux. Dial LP disc No. 2, \$5.95.

▲THIS IS ONE of the most controversial recordings of the year, not because of the music which has established itself in the accepted concert repertoire, but because of the recording. Let it be said at the outset that the recording is technically excellent and sounds best on extended range equipment with a lower turn-over of 300 cps and an upper one comparable to the NAB curve, which Columbia uses.

The acoustic qualities of the studio, in which the recording was made, are far from satisfactory. There is not sufficient resonance to offset the sparse characteristics of Schoenberg's orchestration. The work is scored for only 15 instruments, but while this is in the chamber music genre it nonetheless requires a resonant studio to do justice to the true characteristics of the tonal ensemble. I believe with tone controls set, as given above, many listeners will find interest in the music. Particularly, as conductor Dervaux's reading of the score is a knowing one.

Schoenberg provides notes for the set which will interest his many admirers. He tells us how in this chamber symphony he broke away from the pattern of his earlier works which linked him to the style of his predecessors. Conciseness and brevity takes the place of lengthy "repetitions, sequences and elaboration." In this work, "there is not a single note or figuration which does not result from the development and variation of the basic motive." Thus we are faced with a score which is clarified best with the study of the score, though the ear of the attentive listener may establish the growth of the music. The appeal of this music is a matter of personal temperamental affinity. The score is not without its fascination inasmuch as it points the path to the composer's later works and at the same time shows his link with his predecessors, especially Mahler, Wagner and Strauss. There are five divisions to this symphony but being connected they may not be established immediately by the listener who cannot read a score. Schoenberg gives the latter listener the keynotes to these divisions. A miniature score published by Universal Edition is available.

—P.H.R.

SESSIONS: *Symphony No. 2; Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York*, conducted by **Dmitri Mitropoulos**. Columbia 10" LP disc ML 2120, \$3.85.

▲ROGER SESSIONS has been classified as a modern experimenter and a neo-classicist and accused of being complex and laborious. His seriousness of purpose and his splendid workmanship deserve to be honored at least by several hearings. Dismissing a musical work because it strikes on first acquaintance an alien or sour note is a poor way of learning to appreciate any music.

This symphony was written "under the impetus of a commission from the Alice M. Ditson Fund of Columbia University." If you are an instructor at a university with a fair degree of talent, you stand a chance to get a commission from this fund. Not all the works commissioned win awards, but the present symphony was chosen in 1949 for the Walter W. Naumberg Foundation American Composition Award. That fact is played up all over the covers of the record.

Being unimpressed with this sort of thing, I approached the work with as free a mind as

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I could under the circumstances. I had not progressed more than a short part of the opening movement before I realized that this was music of strength and purpose with rhythmic characteristics that were alive, brusque and impulsive. Its dissonance does not seem to be sought after but the logical outcome of a feeling for this sort of harmonic writing.

The work is dedicated to the memory of the late Franklin Delano Roosevelt, whose death, Sessions tells us, "occurred while I was composing the slow movement. That deeply affecting and fateful event is inextricably associated in my mind with this movement in particular, but also with parts of the first and even the last movements, both of which were only partly finished at the time." The indications at the head of the various movements are the only emotional clues Sessions wishes to give the listener.

Considering the intricate elaboration of Sessions' material, one feels that emotional associations had much more to do with his creative work than, as he would have us believe, "the impulsion of the musical ideas themselves." Perhaps the keynote to the whole work lies in its dedication. To associate the composer's thoughts about Roosevelt, objective as well as subjective, would be a difficult job, but I feel certain they are there nonetheless. The opening *molto agitato* dominates the first movement with its strong, restless drama borne of an inner urge, even though it is abated for a time by the second section marked *Tranquillo e misterioso*. The short second movement, an *Allegretto capriccioso*, does not clarify itself on first hearing and seems almost a misfit. The *Adagio tranquillo ed espressivo* is deeply lamentative but not funereal. The finale, marked *Allegramente* (nimble, lightly, vivaciously), at its climax alters its mood. The dramatic urgency of the first movement returns and the work then ends indecisively.

As an American product, this symphony interests greatly. We have not been given too many recordings of works of this kind, and Columbia deserves a vote of thanks, even though the value of this work over others long neglected can well incite controversy. What about a recording of Copeland's widely praised *Third Symphony*, or Ives' more inherently American opus, *Symphony No. 3*? We cannot value the work of our own composers

without access to comparisons, and surely Awards do have to be made to merit a recording company's attention to other scores which have been well received by critics and audiences.

The performance of Mitropoulos is vivid and alive and filled with a nervous intensity. Every player is very much alert under his urgent baton and the sonorities are all stirring. In the quieter passages, he plays with a feeling which one believes is borne of real admiration for the music. Columbia's recording, made in its 30th Street studio, is rich and sonorous and sounds very much like the Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra as it is heard from a good seat in Carnegie Hall when the house is full for a concert.

—P.H.R.

SUK: *Fantasy for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 24*; **Peter Rybar** (violin) and the **Vienna Symphony Orchestra** conducted by **Henry Swoboda**; and **SMETANA:** *Wallenstein's Camp, Op. 14 (Symphonic Poem)*; **Vienna Symphony Orchestra** conducted by **Henry Swoboda**. Westminster LP disc WL 50-11, \$5.95.

▲SWOBODA turns to music of his native land which he tells me he has long known and admired. The music of Josef Suk, a favorite pupil of Dvorak, has always interested me. He had a natural gift for songful melody and his rhythms throb, as Nicolas Slonimsky says, with the "jollity of Bohemian folk singing."

Suk, says one of his countrymen, "belonged to the favored few who, as sons of musicians, had the opportunity in early youth to hear and perform music continually." He was a valued member of the famed Bohemian String Quartet and among other works wrote a fine quartet, dedicated to this organization. The present opus was written for and dedicated to Karl Hoffman, leader of the Bohemian Quartet. Suk did not have to seek for inspirational sources, Rosa Newmarch tells us in her book — *The Music of Czechoslovakia*, for his was a rich subjectivity. "Every note he writes is part of his life, an experience or a dream." There is the same kind of lyrical melodic beauty in this *Fantasy*, as we hear in Dvorak, but there is also a "passionate restlessness." This supplies drama to a type of composition which cannot rely on the whimsical treatment which Dvorak gives to his *Slavonic Rhapsody* (reviewed elsewhere). A

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more mature work than Suk's *Serenade for Strings*, Op. 6, which I have long admired, I feel certain I shall enjoy this *Fantasy* on many occasions.

Peter Rybar, a first-rate chamber music player, is better in the lyrical sections of the score than the dramatic. However, being a fine musician, if not a virtuoso, he makes music. Swoboda allows his ardor to get the best of him on occasion resulting in some rough orchestral passages. But vitality is a good element in almost any music and it belongs here. The recording is tonally excellent.

Metana's tone poem was discussed at length in our August 1948 issue when Mercury first issued its performance by Rafael Kubelik and the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra (Mercury LP disc MG 10013). An uneven opus, its trumpet fanfares and martial spirit are too obvious for enduring pleasure. The tone poem, based on Schiller's tripartite drama pays a tribute to Liszt, who was friendly to Metana, being Lisztian in style. The present performance is far better recorded than the Mercury, which dates back before the war; but the Vienna Symphony is not as efficient an orchestra as the Czech Philharmonic, nor is Swoboda the equal of Kubelik in this music.

—P.H.R.

cording cannot be judged. As the string players from the Israel Philharmonic are apparently proficient players, it is hoped that any future recordings will be accomplished in a more resonant hall. Coming on top of the violin version of this concerto in the more proficient performance of Szigeti and Stiedry, one is hardly willing to accept this harpsichord version in its place.

—P.H.R.

BEETHOVEN: *Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor*; Claudio Arrau (piano) with the Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Eugene Ormandy. Columbia LP disc ML 4302, \$4.85.

▲**RECORD COLLECTORS** who want a good copy of Beethoven's *Third Concerto* have a problem on the hands. The old Schnabel set is virtually obsolete and hard to locate; the Rubinstein-Toscanini an inferior recording; the Iturbi rather coarse. By far the best modern recording is Solomon's, on HMV. None of these, as far as I know, is available on LP, and the new Arrau-Ormandy version has a clear field in that respect.

Inasmuch as Arrau is a thoroughly competent pianist, and the Philadelphia Orchestra an equally virtuoso ensemble, inasmuch as all the notes are in place and there are no grave errors in taste, the disc can be termed adequate. The letter, rather than the spirit, of the music is followed, however. Arrau, an accurate, steel-fingered pianist, plays coldly, often metronomically, and almost entirely without imagination. Note the manner in which he throws off the cadenza toward the end of the second movement (the score says *sempre con gran espressione*), or the almost disinterested way he plans the lyric episodes of the first movement. He uses Beethoven's cadenzas, playing them impeccably, but for all the world like an efficient cryptographer in front of a decoding machine.

The balance of the recording leaves much to be desired. As in many piano concerto pressings, the microphones have been placed

Concerto

BACH: *Concerto No. 1 in D minor*; Frank Pellegr (harpsichord) with String Orchestra of Members of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by David Grunschlag; and *Four Duets* — Clavierubung Part III, No. 2 in F major; Frank Pellegr. Period LP disc SPLP 509, \$5.95.

▲**FRANK PELLEG** is a noted Israeli pianist and harpsichordist and a sponsor of programs of Bach's music in his native land. He is a gifted player on the older instrument as we learn in listening to his performance of the bold *F major Duet*. The recording of the concerto lacks resonance and the string playing tends to submerge too often the harpsichordist. Moreover, the conductor is stolid in his approach to Bach's music and lacking in phrasological elegance. How much of this is due to the dead studio quality of the re-

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to favor the solo instrument. This results in the piano taking charge to such an extent that string passages are often blocked out.

—H.C.S.

DELLO JOIO: *Concerto for Harp and Orchestra*; Edward Vito (harp) with the Little Orchestra Society, conducted by Thomas K. Scherman, and DIAMOND: *Music for Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet*; same orchestra and conductor. Columbia LP ML 4303, \$4.85.

▲THE DIAMOND work was issued in August 1948. The performance does not quite succeed in substantiating the charm of the music. Mr. Diamond's absorption with Shakespeare is pleasantly diverting and deserves to be heard. Moreover, it is accessible music with a goodly share of youthful sentiment.

The concerto is the work of one of America's most talented and serious composers. Its original performance in the concert hall by the Little Orchestra Society was by no means as fine as the present one, mainly because the harp part was entrusted to another player who treated it in a less sympathetic manner. Edward Vito is one of the best harpists now before the public and his contribution to this recording is of major importance, for his fluently rhythmic treatment of the solo instrument offsets the somewhat angular approach to the music by the conductor. This is a work worth hearing and worth knowing. Dello Joio is a vital and ennobiating composer whose engrossment with old forms has freshness and spontaneity. The work is in two movements — a passacaglia preceded by an extended introduction and "an amiable scherzo," which affords the harp some delightful virtuoso effects deftly contrasted with the orchestral material. Next month, we will discuss Norman Dello Joio and his work at more length. Until then, we urge our readers to get acquainted with this gifted composer.

The recording in both compositions has been excellently contrived. —P.H.R.

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Chamber Music

BEETHOVEN: *Quartet in A major, Op. 18, No. 5; Paganini Quartet*. Victor set WDM 1363, three 7" discs, \$3.35. or LP disc LM 1052, \$5.45.

▲JUDGING from the one remaining performance of this quartet in domestic record catalogues, it would seem the popularity of No. 4 in C minor and No. 6 in B flat has overshadowed this work. Yet, this quartet is not without its appeal. Its finest and most personal movement is the Theme and Variations and its minuet has the charm of the 18th century. The opening movement lacks urgent inspiration and is difficult to play, though it shows Beethoven's formal perfection. The finale, also difficult to play, is not apt to sustain interest if poorly performed.

I am glad to see this work coupled in the LP version with the Paganini's earlier recording of the C minor, for the popularity of the latter may well help to make new friends for this quartet. The Paganini ensemble play it well, but not so smoothly or so effectively as the Leners did. Temianka, the first violinist, tends to steal the show as his playing is tonally suave and gracious. The inner voices are a bit rough on occasion and that unusual violin pizzicato passage in the finale is too obscured. The new cellist, Adolphe Frezin, has not quite the assertive quality of the late Robert Maas. For my part, I find the LP version preferable to the 45 one. —P.H.R.

BEETHOVEN: *Cello Sonata No. 4 in C, Op. 102, No. 1; Pierre Fournier (cello) and Artur Schnabel (piano)*. RCA Victor 45 rpm set WDM-1370, two 7" discs, \$2.40.

▲THE C MAJOR CELLO SONATA is one of the first of those last works by Beethoven that represent the composer's journey into "strange seas of thought" and his discovery of "unsuspected islands and even continents." A powerful, concise composition, this sonata contains superb slow introductions to its two movements that seem to me the finest work that Beethoven produced in this genre.

The Fournier-Schnabel performance is very fine, particularly in the introductions. Fournier, however, misses some of the dramatic

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Impact in the fast sections of the work that one experiences in the Casals-Horszowski discs (HMV DB-3065/6).

The English recording has been effectively transferred to 45 rpm discs and the surfaces are quiet.

—C.J.L.

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4 Guide

Keyboard

BEETHOVEN: *Sonata in E flat (Op. 31, No. 3); SCHUBERT: Impromptu in G;*

Artur Rubinstein (piano). RCA Victor set WDM-1371, three 45 rpm discs, \$3.35.

PIANISTS love this sonata and when the last movement is played well it is a real cheerleader. It is a middle-period work, full of the muscularity of Beethoven's conceptions at that time. One would think that it is tailored to Rubinstein's specifications. It isn't though. What comes out on these discs is a startling exemplar of the artist versus the virtuoso, with the latter sweeping the field.

One can see that Rubinstein set out to be "correct," to scale down his dynamics, to bow before the Behemoth of Bonn. It does not take long before these admirable resolutions are scattered; a change of tempo here, a virtuosic sweep there, always with the audience in mind. There are many interesting touches to the conception; but actually the results, especially in the last movement, have little to do with Beethoven. Once upon a time Rubinstein's Beethoven was much more convincing.

The Schubert *Impromptu in G*, which occupies the last side, is a much finer piece of work from the pianist. He handles the running accompaniment beautifully, singing out the melody gracefully and without sentimentality. Few living pianists can approach Rubinstein in romantic music when he is in the mood to play well, and he is playing very well indeed in this Schubert encore. He has been given good recording, though the sound sometimes is a little thinner than it should be.

—H.C.S.

CHOPIN: *Nine Mazurkas — E minor (Op. 17, No. 2), G minor (Op. 24, No. 1), A minor (Op. 17, No. 4), A flat (Op. 17, No. 3), A minor (Op. No. 59, 1), G sharp minor (Op.*



Pierre Fournier

33, No. 1), A minor (Op. 67, No. 4), C sharp minor (Op. 63, No. 3) and C major (Op. 7, No. 5); Maryla Jonas (piano). Columbia 10-inch LP disc ML 2101, \$3.85.

▲ANY LINGERING IMPRESSION of Miss Jonas' qualities as a pianist is consolidated with the release of this disc. At best she plays in a pretty, small-scaled fashion. She can be dainty and graceful, she is an exquisite pianissimist, and she understands the rhythm of these mazurkas very well. Her musical taste, though, is dubious, and apparently she is not much of a technician. Wisely, she plays only those pieces that are in her fingers. This automatically excludes a considerable portion of the repertoire, including many of the finest mazurkas.

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What she plays here is scarcely a representative example. Of the nine, the first six are slow in tempo and similar in mood. The next two are not too much faster, and only in the tiny *C major* (*Op. 7, No. 5*) is there any relief from the monotony in tempo. The result, after while, is insipid and completely misrepresents Chopin, who is not as lily-like, languid and sissified in mood as Miss Jonas suggests. Nor does she help matters by the inevitable, sentimental, pianissimo ritards with which she concludes nearly all the pieces she has undertaken. For the correct approach to the Chopin mazurkas one still turns to the Rubinstein sets. It is rather a pity that, considering the many real gifts Miss Jonas owns, she does not have more spine with which to back them up. —H.C.S.

CHOPIN: *Twenty-Four Preludes*; **Guiomar Novaes** (piano). Vox LP disc VL 6170, \$4.85. **CHOPIN:** *Sonata in B flat minor*; *Fantasy in F minor*; **Guiomar Novaes** (piano). Vox LP disc VL 6230, \$4.85.

▲HERE WE HAVE a sizable dollop of what Huneker used to call "the greater Chopin," played by one of the greater pianists. Guiomar Novaes, who never before has really had a chance to show what she can do on records, is one of the veterans of the keyboard. She always, in concert, looks so remarkably young that it is hard to remember that the encyclopedias give her birth year as 1895, that she made her American debut somewhere around World War I and that she is an exponent of a pianistic style that was Hoffmann's, Rosenthal's, Godowsky's and Lhevinne's.

Not that she plays like any of the above gentlemen. The similarities are in general approach rather than specific treatment: the approach that considers the piano an instrument upon which to sing, the approach that remembers the interesting fact that a piano has pedals, and the approach contains a perilous mixture of individuality. Mme. Novaes is nothing if not an individualist. She often does things that are not in the book, and she could not be considered an intellect in the sense that Rachmaninoff, say, was. She is an instinctive pianist with an extraordinary technical equipment. She has one of the most beautiful tones of any pianist before the public, she knows the value of

contrast, and her rhythmic elasticity is a de-
light.

All this qualifies her as a player of romantic music. In her recording of the *Preludes* she does things that are considered out of fashion — rhythmic shifts, emphasis of inner voices, accentuations that are quite personal — but under her fingers everything holds together magnificently. I would rank this recording of the *Preludes* with the first Cortot version, around 1928, as the finest ever made. The recent Rubinstein set appears to have been hastily made and in addition suffers from a sickness of conception.

Rubinstein, however, was at his best in his recording of the *B flat minor Sonata* and offers Mme. Novaes some strenuous competition. It is interesting to compare the differences. Rubinstein's is in the grand manner: exciting, athletic, with infinite bravura. That of Novaes is smaller-scaled, more interesting in detail, somewhat more poetic, and much more colorful. She does things to the last movement that I do not recall from any other pianist — delicate pedal manipulations, pressure of the thumb to create a wonderful inner line, and perhaps a softer quality than the moody *sotto voce* that Chopin intended.

In the great *F minor Fantasy*, only one previous recording artist—Cortot—comes near. His version is one of the greatest things he ever did. Where he was fairly objective, though, Novaes is personal; and where he attacked the work with a steely, though majestic, touch, Novaes goes about it with delicacy and nuance. Both interpretations, of course, are entirely valid in their way.

The Novaes recordings are adequate, with the disc of the *Sonata* and *Fantasy* a little fuller than that of the *Preludes*. In one or two of the slower *Preludes* there is the trace of a waver on my motor, something not apparent on the companion disc. A warning to those who are interested in the sonata: an error in pressing sent out a few copies that contained a cut in the Funeral March movement. The entire reprise was omitted. Make sure that your copy contains the entire movement.

—H.C.S.

WEBER: *Invitation to the Dance*, Op. 65; **Alexander Brailowsky** (piano). Victor 7" disc 49-0919, 95c.

▲A clean, rather dry-toned performance of Weber's original piano piece which has be-

some more familiar to most in the orchestral version by Berlioz. Mr. Brailowsky exploits little of the grace and sentiment which rightfully belongs to this waltz. Schnabel's richer and warmer performance (HMV DB6491) is preferable even though the recording is not so good.

—J.N.

Voice

CURTIS: *Torna a Surrento*. **FREIRE:** *Ay, Ay*; James Melton (tenor) with **RCA Victor Orchestra**, conducted by **Frank Black**. **RCA Victor 7" disc 49-0945, 95c.**

▲MELTON is a tenor with an appealing voice and dependable vocalization. What he lacks is style and subtlety. Schipa's *Ay, Ay* is too well remembered for me to accept this unimaginative rendition and there are a half dozen Italian tenors around who sing better the de Curtis tribute to love and scenic beauty in Sorrento.

—J.N.

EDWARDS: *Into the Night*; and **LA FORCE:** *Grieve Not, Beloved*; Thomas Hayward (tenor) with **Frank La Force** (piano). **RCA Victor 7" disc 49-1010, 95c (also 10" disc 10-1535, \$1.00).**

▲MR. HAYWARD'S fine musicianship distinguishes these two songs. He sings simply and with feeling. Mr. La Force is, as always, the competent and finished accompanist. The recording effects a good balance, but I would have liked a bit more piano tone.

—J.N.

DONIZETTI: *Il Campanello* (Opera Buffa in One Act); Clara Scarangella (soprano), Sesto Bruscantini (basso), Miti Trucato Pace (mezzo-soprano), Renato Cappelli (bass-baritone), Angelo Mercuriali (tenor), **Orchestra and Chorus of Radio Italiana** conducted by **Alfredo Simonetto**. **Cetra-Soria LP disc 50.027, \$5.95.**

▲THIS TYPICALLY early 19th-century, Italian *melodramma giocoso* was composed in 1836, the year following the *opera serioso*, *Lucia*. It was written in nine days to save a Neapolitan impresario from impending ruin, which it did. *Il Campanello*, based on a

French vaudeville act, concerns itself with a youthful "wolf" and cousin of a young bride who has just married an elderly apothecary. The latter is about to celebrate his marriage but is thwarted by the jealous Enrico, who dons a series of disguises and keeps the apothecary's bell ringing all night, demanding various medical aids. In the morning the harassed apothecary who must depart on a business trip, has to leave his young bride knowing the ardent Enrico has been left behind to pursue his suit.

Musically, this operatic trifle is rather threadbare. Scraps of *Lucia* and *Il Barbiere* prevail. The amusing story unquestionably made for its success in Europe in its time, and one suspects with a well cast ensemble it makes for good theater. Its style, musical sections broken up by recitatives accompanied by the piano, asks for knowledge of the Italian language for full enjoyment. Fortunately Cetra supplies a full libretto in both Italian and English. There are two delicious scenes. One in which Enrico comes disguised as a singer who has temporarily lost his voice (this is worth the price of the disc) and another in which he comes disguised as an old man "who lists his wife's ills and aches in interminable succession and then proceeds to give the frantic apothecary a fantastic prescription to be made up in pills." The latter scene is handled in the patter style of Rossini.

Italian radio performances of opera have never been notable for finesse, but after all this *opera buffa* doesn't ask for refinement but clever characterization. The apothecary (Bruscantini) and Enrico (Capecchi), who carry the burden of the piece, are apparently capable singing actors. Serafina, on the other hand, is sung by a shrill, metallic soprano, who might have eye appeal in the theater but who certainly hasn't ear appeal in a recording. But she, like the balance of the cast, has the vivacity and enthusiasm to put over the show. Conductor Simonetto's lively pacing is all to the good.

The reproduction is quite realistic and generally well balanced.

—J.N.

DVORAK: *Songs my Mother Taught Me*. **RABAY:** *Tes yeux*; Jeanette MacDonald (soprano) with **Orchestra conducted by Robert Armbruster**. **RCA Victor 7" disc 49-0921, 95c.**

▲BOTH SONGS would have been preferable with piano accompaniments, and more fitting to the intimate style of the singer. The orchestral direction is without taste or distinction. Miss MacDonald sings prettily the difficult salon song of Rabay, but her Dvorak seems over scrupulous and her voice is too close to the mike. There are needless retards in both songs both on the singer's and the conductor's part. Acceptable recording.

—J.N.

HAYDN: *Missa Cellensis in C major (Marizellermesse); Gisela Rauthauscher (soprano), Auguste Janacek (alto), Kurt Equilus (tenor), Walter Berry (bass), Josef Nebois (organ), Vienna Akademie Chorus and Vienna Symphony Orchestra conducted by Hans Gillesberger. Haydn Society LP disc 2011, \$5.95.*

▲ALTHOUGH THE STUDENT of style may concur with Karl Geiringer that "the style of the *Missa Cellensis* as a whole is far from homogeneous," it has some of Haydn's best choral writing and many melodic beauties. The work dates from 1782 and according to Geiringer shows a "greater degree of concentration" than the *Mass of St. Cecilia* which preceded it and makes new use of the quartet of solo voices, "which was to become extremely important in the masses of Haydn's last period."

As one listens to this music, one becomes aware of the simplicity, yet deep sincerity of Haydn's faith. Why should the mass be a completely austere expression? To be sure, Bach and Beethoven treated it in this manner, and gave us music of profundity and noble strength. Yet, I find myself a most willing listener to this music of Haydn, so tender on occasion, so joyous, and so melodically gratiating. The solo sections are free from ostentation, so singable and appealing. Remembering Mozart's setting of the *Et incarnatus est* (in the *Gloria* section) in his Mass in C major, K. 427 (recently released by the Haydn Society — see May issue) I am struck with Haydn's gentler setting of the text for tenor solo. Haydn could not separate the church and the theater, and he reuses in his *Benedictus* the material of a duet from one of his operas, recast for solo quartet. Here, the pace is altered and the effect seems just right fitting the words of the mass.

The *Agnus Dei* is followed by a fugue which the annotator rightfully labels one of "Haydn's

most inspired movements." It is a memorable conclusion to a most appealing work.

The performance is competent and properly devotional. The soloists are capable singers with pleasing voices. The chorus, 33 voices in all, is a well blended ensemble. The resonant quality of the reproduction could have been a little more alive, but the whole effect is satisfying with the orchestra obviously in the foreground and no soloist hugging the microphone. Some wavering of pitch was noticeable in my review copy, especially in the beginning.

—P.H.R.

MOZART: *Two Scenes from Don Giovanni; Ljuba Welitch (soprano) with Alessio de Paolis (tenor) and the Orchestra of the Metropolitan Opera. SONGS BY LJUBA WELITCH: I Grieve; The Miller (Dargomyshsky); Star Tell me (Moussorgsky); Hat dich die liebe beruht; Valse à Chopin (Marx); Die Nacht; Cäcilie (R. Strauss); Ljuba Welitch and Paul Ulanowsky (piano). Columbia 10" LP ML 2118, \$3.85.*

▲LAST FEBRUARY Ljuba Welitch appeared for the first time at the Metropolitan Opera House as Donna Anna in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. Fritz Reiner conducted on that occasion.

This performance, which I attended, presented Mozart's masterpiece in a most unusual manner. By speeding up almost all of the tempi and by contrasting (through the use of sharply diversified dynamics and tonal weights and textures) the different scenes of the opera, Reiner threw into bold relief the conflict of Don Giovanni's life force and Donna Anna's vengeance. Welitch collaborated with Reiner by presenting Donna Anna as a symbol of revenge rather than as a human being.

Though this stimulating method of presentation threw much light on one of the most important facets of *Don Giovanni*, it all the same succeeded in draining the humanity out of all the characters in the play. Leporello assumed an unimportance that was new in my experience, and Zerlina and Masetto were all but lost in the excitement.

Virgil Thomson, reporting on the performance in the *New York Herald Tribune*, was sympathetic to the fresh presentation, because for once *Don Giovanni* has been played and sung "without sugar." This was certainly

ture and it must have delighted everyone who, like your reviewer, considers Mozart got a sweet, but a meat.

As fascinating as Reiner's conception of the opera was, however, it did not sustain my interest throughout the work. The spectacle of seeing so many known characters reduced to puppets made for too many uninteresting intervals during one evening in the theatre. Then, too, the excitement created by the general conception together with the rapid tempi caused nearly one on stage to race against the orchestra.

For this recording Ljuba Welitch and Fritz Reiner have everything — including themselves — under control. It is apparent that their ideas about the music have not changed. But since they have made only part of two of the large-scale scenes (*Don Ottavio! Son morto!, Or sai chi l'onore; Crudele? Ah, no, mio ben!*; *Non mi dir*), the record holds one's attention and becomes a valuable souvenir.

Here then are two memorable passages from this extraordinary performance excellently rendered by Welitch, Reiner and his men. Welitch's singing of this music seems to me the best since Rosa Ponselle's memorable performances, and by far the most desirable recorded version. I congratulate everyone who was responsible for including the recitatives and Columbia especially for spending the extra money it took to get a tenor to sing the few lines allotted to Don Ottavio in the first excerpt.

Welitch's song recital on the reverse face of this LP contains flawless vocalism and no little expressive power. If the recital is a trifle wearying to take at one sitting, I would say that the disturbing elements lie in the selection of some poor songs and with the lack of some dark-hued sounds to augment the almost incessant brightness of Welitch's characteristic tonal color palette.

Welitch's ability to sing Russian songs in their proper tongue is especially noteworthy, and her handling of Moussorgsky's poetic *Star, Tell Me* is particularly appealing. Paul Ulanowsky's piano accompaniments are expressively appropriate and tonally agreeable.

The recording of Welitch's voice on both sides of this disc is superb and the piano in the recital sounds unusually natural. The orchestra in the *Don Giovanni* excerpts sounds a little too faint for proper balance. Surfaces we acceptable.

—C.J.L.



Ellabelle Davis

OPERATIC AIRS: *Don Carlo* — *Tu che le vanita conosci del mondo* (Verdi); *La Wally* — *Ebben? ne andro lontana* (Catalani); Ellabelle Davis (soprano) with New Symphony Orchestra conducted by Warwick Braithwaite, and A COLLECTION OF LIEDER: *Wanderers Nachtlied*; *Lachen und weinen*; *Wohin?* (Schubert); *Allerseelen*; *Befreit* (Strauss); Ellabelle Davis (soprano) and Hubert Green-slaide (piano). London 10" LP disc LPS 181, \$4.95. **NEGRO SPIRITUALS:** *Nobody knows de trouble I've seen* (arr. Burleigh); *Good news* (arr. Hayes); *On ma journey* (arr. Boatner); *I am a travelling to the grave* (arr. Dett); *My soul's been anchored in the Lord* (arr. Price); Ellabelle Davis (soprano) and Hubert Green-slaide (piano), and *I stood on de ribber of Jordan* (arr. Burleigh). *Plenty good room* (arr. Boatner); *Were you there?* (arr. Burleigh); *Oh, what a beautiful city* (arr. Boatner); Ellabelle Davis (soprano) with orchestra conducted by Victor Olof. London 10" LP disc LPS 182, \$4.95.

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▲ONE OF MY BIG THRILLS in the months following my return from the last war was a Town Hall recital by Ellabelle Davis. Word had reached me in the Pacific that here was an important singer, and certainly she did not let me down. Since then I have hoped for records. She actually made some for Columbia, but somehow they got lost in the shuffle, and only now, by way of England, comes a sampling of her art. Beginning properly with the Italian arias, I must confess to a keen disappointment. So here was another great talent turned aside. To be sure the voice itself had a lovely quality, but it was not the luscious thing I remembered. Here was none of that enveloping and ear-caressing tone that is the mark of the true Verdi voice—the sort of thing we used to hear from Ponselle, from Muzio, and, to name a non-Italian, from Rethberg. The lovely *Don Carlo* aria (we must be grateful to Miss Davis for bringing this to us instead of one of the staples) requires unusual breath support, and this the singer has in such abundance that she sustains it to the limit and forgets to be passionate. The *Wally* air is even less satisfactory; here she is so leisurely as almost to lose track of the really beautiful melody. The Schubert songs fare better, but still there must be reservations. *Wanderers Nachtlid* is perfectly placed in word and tone, but Miss Davis does not talk to us. In serving Schubert she forgets Goethe, thereby defeating the composer's purpose. *Lachen und weinen* is neither light enough nor arch enough, and *Wohin* wants in flexibility. But then comes Strauss. Never in my experience have I heard *Allerseelen* sung so well, and at long last I am willing to call it a really great song. Every syllable and every tone counts; there is line, form, mood and tonal beauty. And for once the piano sings with the voice (if anything a little too softly) neither lumbering nor encumbering. Repeated hearings still give me goose flesh. *Befreit*, a song about the greatness of which I have never had a doubt, is every bit as well done. After this it must take a true artist to hold us through a program of spirituals, but Miss Davis does it. Here is the essential simplicity with an irresistibly melting tone quality, despite the rather fancy accompaniments used and even some atrocious orchestration. *Nobody knows de trouble I've seen* and *Were you there* have never been more moving. There may be

minor blemishes, but they count for nothing. Indeed, returning to the Italian arias, though I still do not accept them as authentic performances, I can listen to them with pleasure. This is a great singer. Let's have more from her.

I found the reproduction best with some of the highs cut; in the last band of the first side of spirituals there is a falling away in volume, but on the whole the recording is better than good.

—P.L.M.

SCOTCH AND IRISH SONGS: *Loch Lomond* (Traditional); *Bendemeer's Stream* (Traditional); *Where the River Shannon Flows* (Russell); *My Ain Folk* (Lemon); *My Laddie* (Thayer); *A Little Bit of Heaven* (Ball); *Danny Boy* (Weatherly); *Comin' Thro' the Rye* (Traditional); **Nadine Connor** (soprano) with Columbia Concert Orchestra conducted by **Sylvan Shulman**. Columbia 10" LP disc ML 2116, \$3.85.

▲THE full-toned orchestral accompaniments are hardly traditional ones. Mind you, they are not in poor taste, but they certainly lard the proceedings. Miss Connor, however, woos and wins me on every point. She sings simply and affectingly. I thought of Alma Gluck as she sang *My Laddie* and of a dozen prima donnas who have sung *Comin' Thro' the Rye* less simply and pleasingly than Miss Connor. I would have preferred other genuine Scotch songs to the Irish ones included here, but the soprano shows her taste and charm even in these all-too-familiar favorites. Mr. Shulman is a vital conductor who swamps the singer on occasion, but the orchestra sounds good and I can believe the conductor's firm support was appreciated by the singer. Excellent recording quality.—J.N.

WORK SONGS AND SPIRITUALS: *Water Boy* (Robinson — arr. de Paur); *Tol' My Cap'n* (arr. de Paur); *Jerry* (arr. de Paur); *Great Gaud A' mighty* (Hairston); *Sweet Little Jesus Boy* (MacGimsey — arr. de Paur); *Honor, Honor* (arr. de Paur); *His Name So Sweet* (arr. de Paur); *Take My Mother Home* (Johnwon); *Listen to the Lambs* (Dett); **De Paur Infantry Chorus** conducted by **Leonard de Paur**. Columbia 10" LP disc ML2119, \$3.85.

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MOST OF US know by now that this group of singers was formed during the late war. The adjective "Infantry" reminds of this fact and at the same time labels their style of singing. It has certain disciplined characteristics. I suspect de Paur got many of his ideas from the Cossack choirs. Some of the performances are over-weighted and over-dramatized, while others have a moving quality which is characteristic of Negro singers. The work songs, such as *Tol' My Cap'n, Jerry*, and *Great Gaud A' Mighty* should be done more simply in the manner of the late Leadbelly, but de Paur prefers excitement and in *Jerry* it's effective. Almost all of de Paur's arrangements are tricky; for this reason I like best the Johnson and Dett Spiritual arrangements. First rate recording. —J.N.

In the Popular Vein

By Enzo Archetti

New Moon — Favorite Selections (Romberg); Capitol Album CC-217, 3-10" discs. *Vagabond King — Favorite Selections (Friml);* Capitol Album CC-218, 3-10" discs. Both featuring **Gordon MacRae** and **Lucille Norman**, with Chorus and Orchestra conducted by **Paul Weston**.

One of the best features of the Railroad Hour on the air was its streamlined operettas. Here are two of them, pleasantly presented more or less the same way they were on the air, with the same artists, chorus, orchestra, and conductor. Capitol has done a good recording job. MacRae's throaty baritone does not erase memories of Dennis King but his singing is virile and generally good. Lucille Norman's soprano is light and pleasant.

Whistling For You: **Fred Lowery**, with guitar and novachord accompaniment. Columbia CL-6091. *Harpist's Holiday:* **Robert Maxwell**, harpist. Columbia CL-6104.

Both are LP transfers of Albums C-148 and C-149. In their own miscellaneous way, they are just as enjoyable now as they were when first issued. Fred Lowery's whistling is still something to marvel at and Maxwell's harp playing is still soothing and pleasant. Both discs make good late-evening listening.

The transfers have been skillfully done. In fact, the quality of sound seems to have been improved.

Yale Glee Club: *The Yale Glee Club* directed by **Marshall Bartholomew**. Columbia CL-6097.

• The Yale Glee Club sings 13 contrasting songs that definitely belong to the American musical scene. The collection consists of four different areas of musical composition: the school song, sea chants, American folk songs, and spirituals. Whether they are gay or mournful, rousing or sadly searching, these songs are sung with fine precision and evident pleasure by one of America's foremost singing groups.

Golden Gate Spirituals: *Golden Gate Quartet*; Columbia CL-6102.

• These four singers have done much to increase the general popularity of the spiritual with their high-spirited arrangements of rhythmic numbers and their superb harmonies on more solemn selections. Masters of precise attack, the Golden Gate Quartet sing the eight numbers here with evident enjoyment. Their enthusiasm is communicative.

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Popular Favorites, Volume II: Columbia CL-6119.

● This collection, especially assembled for presentation on LP records, is a companion record to *Popular Favorites, Volume I*, (CL-6057). This one includes *American Beauty Rose* by Frank Sinatra; *The Wedding Samba* by Xavier Cugat; *Nice To Have A Man Around the House* by Dinah Shore; *Doncha Go 'way Mad* by Harry James; *Hoop-dee-doo* by Doris Day; *There Goes My Heart* by Herb Jeffries; *Candy and Cake* by Arthur Godfrey; and *It Isn't Fair* by Les Brown — all of which have been hits on the air and in the juke boxes in recent months. Bunched like this, they make a good popular concert. The recordings sound just as good as the original 78's.

East Side Rendezvous: **Bernie Leighton** (piano) with rhythm accompaniment; Columbia CL-6112.

● Cocktail music — designed for tuneful relaxation. Two uninterrupted medleys of tunes by Irving Berlin, George Gershwin, Ralph Rainger, Jimmy McHugh, Duke Ellington, and others, played in a deceptively casual manner by a splendid pianist backed by a first-rate rhythm group. The effect of the music is exciting in an insinuating way. Excellent as background for conversation or music to be savored along with a drink or two, this is the better grade cocktail bar music such as may be found in some rendezvous spots on the East Side of New York. The excellent recording helps greatly.

LP Re-Issues

(Continued from page 359)

Whether or not Beecham's late association with RCA Victor and certain commitments prompted the LP version of the conductor's traversal of Beethoven's *Symphony No. 4*, we cannot say. What we suspect is the technical side of the House of Victor voted this version over the older one by Toscanini, for it is in every way a finer recording. But the Toscanini performance was one of the maestro's more intimate readings of

Beethoven — one of the fine sets he made England with the B.B.C. Symphony. Beecham's interpretation is less searching and rewarding than his earlier traversal of Beethoven *Second Symphony*, though it is preeminently musical approach and fine choral playing. It is preferable to the rather incisive and impersonal reading of Szell.

Though all of the Brahms' symphonies records are most rewardingly projected by Eugene Ormandy, our admiration of Koussevitzky's reading of the *Third Symphony* prevails. It is one of this conductor's best Brahms' performances. Moreover, it is the best recording of the work on records. Victor's LP issue (disc LM-1025) is in every way a preferred version to former releases, now that we have come to hear such works performed as the composer intended them to be, the old 78 version of this performance no longer tolerable.

The LP re-issue of Prokofieff's *Symphony No. 5* (disc LM-1045) is another endorsement of the technical boys of Victor. It's quite good as the old 78 version, which was originally sent to us. But though it steals an edge on the Columbia version (Rodzinski) a preference lies with the latter. Koussevitzky excels only in the second movement; elsewhere he is too patently dramatic and in the first movement he overblows the brass, making for a confusion of inner lines. Rodzinski is the only conductor who has substantiated the grace of this movement and, for us, clarified its meaning.

Columbia engineers still show their skill in handling LP re-issues. Those admirable performances of Isaac Stern — the *Mozart Sonata in B flat K. 378* and the *Haydn Concerto in C major* (for Violin and String Orchestra) — have been coupled on LP disc M-4301. The Haydn offers a delightful facet of the composer's art in a performance including the backbone instrument of the 18th century orchestra, the cembalo.

Former set MM-676 housing vocal selections from the picture *Carnegie Hall* is now issued on a 10" LP (ML 2113). Lily Pons, Rise Stevens, and Ezio Pinza sing a group of operatic arias, the best of which are Pinza's

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